

**California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley
Fresno County Public Forum
Fresno, CA – April 7, 2006**

Member Testimony

Assemblyman Juan Arambula (31st Assembly District)

Education – Assembly Bill 2859

- AB 2859 would give superintendents greater control of their school districts:
 - This will allow for faster reaction to school problems and poor performance.
- ACMAT – Academic Crisis Management Assistance Team is a proposal to allow quicker turnaround with education problems – it would allow:
 - The county superintendent to intervene when a problem is first detected.
 - ACMAT can work with the superintendent to intervene and find a solution to a problem.

Follow up questions/comments:

To whom is the superintendent accountable?

The superintendent is accountable to the voters of the county. Also, ACMAT would not be a political entity. There will be a 25 person board that will review the process.

How are the cases handled?

The request for help will be judged on a case by case basis.

How is a team created?

The group will assess the problems then create a lead. The lead will go back to the district and more closely assess the problems of the district. From that point the lead will contract out to experts who can solve the problems.

The process will be identical to Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team (FICMAT).

The California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley (Partnership) votes to support AB 2859.

Panel Testimony

Special Health Care Issues

Maria Pallavicini – Dean of Natural Sciences, UC Merced

- Health care is a problem for the San Joaquin Valley (Valley).
- There is a shortage of general practitioners and specialist working in the Valley.
- Adding a medical school at UC Merced will help bring doctors to the Valley:
 - Doctors generally practice close to their school.

- Competition between UC Riverside and UC Merced is not an issue:
 - Both schools are jointly pursuing medical schools for each campus; however there is a chance that only one will be granted.
 - It will be necessary to maintain an active voice in pushing for the medical school.
- Training for multicultural medicine at UC Merced will be interwoven throughout the medical program.
- UC Merced will look for a diverse student body that represents the population of the Valley.

Tim Curley – Vice President Hospital Council of Northern & Central California

- The Valley is facing a nursing shortage.
- The Central Valley Nursing Education Consortium is a proposal to help solve the problem – the program proposes:
 - Enhanced education for nursing and producing more registered nurses than the Valley needs.
 - Nursing education is not sufficient:
 - More than half of the applicants for nursing were denied or deferred because the schools lacked the capacity.
 - Provide student support services so students can coordinate their rotations and learning.

Government Panel

Trinidad Rodriguez – Council Member, Fresno County

- Air quality is a major issue which directly leads to health issues.
- Developing a better mass transit system will help improve the air quality problem.
- Two cornerstones for economic development are infrastructure and education.
- Top three priorities for the Valley:
 - Regional highway improvements.
 - East-West corridors.
 - Long term loan programs for economic development projects.

Dr. Carole Goldsmith – Director of Workforce Development

- How to bring jobs to the Valley:
 - Equitable funding for higher education and vocational education.
 - Support SB 61.
 - Competitiveness for external funding by giving preference to Valley grant seekers.

Blake Konczal – Fresno County Workforce Investment Board

- The State is not fully aware of the needs of the Valley.
- The State needs to spend money more wisely:
 - When considering a program, consider the program as an investment and what returns will be generated.
- Determine if the workforce training programs actually meets the needs of the Valley.
- Make sure money provided for new training programs actually creates new programs and doesn't go to waste.

Kathy Millison – City Manager, City of Clovis

- Water storage is an issue and there needs to be more facilities in the Valley.
- Funding for improvements and repairs for Highway 99 is a top priority.
- Technology for retaining water and recycling water needs to be on the cutting edge.
- Consider the Regional Blueprint when considering land use and housing – at this point the Partnership’s plan will not meet the needs of the Valley.
- Top three priorities for the Valley:
 - Transportation.
 - Air Quality.
 - Water.
- The Partnership and the Regional Blueprint need to be accepted by all Valley residents.

Dr. Peter Mehas – Fresno County Office of Education

- Thanked the Partnership for supporting Assemblyman Arambula’s education bill.
- Support the high school exit exam and continue to pursue consistent level of standards for education.

Business Panel

Al Smith - Greater Fresno Chamber of Commerce

- Top four concerns for small business:
 - Frivolous Law Suits.
 - Taxes.
 - Workers Compensation.
 - Labor Regulations.
- An educated workforce serves a community two fold:
 - Makes the Valley a more desirable as a place to do business.
 - Reduces crime because people will either have jobs or have the ability to work.
- The Partnership must emphasize the importance of education

Doug Jensen - Economic Development Corporation for Fresno County

- The taxes the Valley pays do not necessarily come back to the Valley.
- Water Storage has multiple issues:
 - Regulating use water.
 - Retaining water.
 - Recycling water.
 - Storing water.
- All fees imposed on the Valley by Sacramento take capital out of the Valley:
 - That capital could be used to reinvest in the business and community.

Paul Betancourt - Fresno County Farm Bureau

- The Partnership should think big and consider what impact the Valley has on the world.
- Vocational education continues to be gutted in the state and it is a key to getting back to a world class scale.
- Trade taxes are unequal:
 - Local farmers are taxed heavily when they trade overseas, and imports do not experience an equal burden.
- Top three priorities for the Valley:
 - Water Storage.
 - Water Quality.
 - Highway 99 needs to become Interstate 99.

Dr. John Welty – President Fresno University

Thanked the Partnership for its efforts and emphasized the needs for education.

Tom Vidmar – Anlin Industries

- Business needs electricity and agriculture needs water – there should be consideration for hydro-electric energy.
- Vocational education is necessary for the welfare for the Valley:
 - There are not enough skilled workers in the Valley.
- Transportation should focus on Highway 99 – it is not up to standards.
- Air quality is an issue that needs to be addressed.
- Business regulations are killing businesses in California.

Mike Brandini – Building Industry Association

- Support SB 1800 because it provides long term planning for building.

Ken Newby – Fresno Business Council

- The scope of the work groups covers the needs of the Valley.
- Air quality has an impact on every issue the Valley faces:
 - It impacts the companies that will come to the Valley.
 - It impacts the people who will live in the Valley.
 - Technology that can help improve the air quality is necessary.
- Vocational education is a cornerstone to solving the Valley's problems.
- Business competition throughout the world is at an all time high.
- There needs to be a support system to help business compete in the world market.
- An infrastructure blueprint is necessary because this will guide the future of the Valley.
- The Partnership needs to continue because October is just too close.
- The Partnership provides leadership among the Valley.
- Must recognize a successor for the Partnership that can continue to pursue the concerns already addressed.

Community Panel

Keith Bergthold – Fresno Housing Alliance

- Six of the 40 least affordable housing metropolitan areas exist in the Valley.
- Low-income housing tax credits need to be raised.
- The Valley needs a 10 year plan to avoid the increase of homelessness.
- State and regional land trusts need to be created to assist with affordable housing.
- Housing prices are growing faster than the median income of the Valley.

Keith Kelley – Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development

- Community development corporations are the most important entity and there are not enough of them in the Valley.
- Need to capture and find the cash society:
 - There are people with money who will help communities develop.
- There should be a community work group in the Partnership.

Suzanne Bertz Rosa – Creative Economy Council

- To keep the educated community in the Valley, the residents must be bold and lead the Valley as a whole:
 - Bold in bringing broadband and technology.
 - Bold in bringing arts to the Valley.
 - Bold in telling cities to take a back seat when the Valley profits.
 - Bold in solving the environmental issues.
- Define the region as a whole and not just by the individual towns.

Lue Yang – Fresno Center for New Americans

- Refugees come to America without education or a plan and directly impact and burden the community:
 - There needs to be a plan to help these families.
 - Bring companies to the Valley that are industrial and don't require skilled labor to help provide jobs for refugees.
- Affordable housing continues to burden the Valley.

Kurt Madden – One by One Leadership

- Sustained leadership tends keep a plan moving – the concern is that the Partnership breaks up and the plan goes to the book shelf.
- The Partnership needs to choose a successor so it doesn't lose steam.